

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

July 7, 2004

**Don't Believe John Ashcroft's SPIN about the  
Sanders-Paul-Conyers-Nadler Amendment**

Dear Colleague:

You may have seen some misleading arguments in opposition to the Sanders-Paul-Conyers-Nadler amendment to the Commerce-Justice-State-Judiciary appropriations bill. I would like to give you the facts and tell you that our amendment seeks only to restore the privacy and free speech rights we are entitled to as Americans.

A recent dear colleague claims that, without being able to use section 215 of the USA PATRIOT Act to pry into the reading habits of law-abiding Americans at libraries and bookstores, "the FBI would be powerless" to get needed information about terrorists.

In fact, the Justice Department has always had the authority to seek relevant information from libraries and bookstores, it just needed to show probable cause before a federal judge. The Department's own website ([www.lifeandliberty.gov](http://www.lifeandliberty.gov)) says: "Law enforcement authorities have always been able to obtain business records in criminal cases through grand jury subpoenas."

What they are not telling you is that the USA PATRIOT Act allows the government to seek this information with a rubber-stamped court order from a secret court. The government wants to use this authority to learn about the reading habits of law-abiding Americans and is an affront to our privacy and free speech rights.

We simply want to restore some checks and balances.

I urge you to support the Sanders-Paul-Conyers-Nadler amendment to H.R. 4518.

Sincerely,

John Conyers, Jr.  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Judiciary